

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 20015 231323Z POSS DUPE
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TAGS: EAIR, OCLR, BTRA, UR
SUBJECT: CIVAIR - YEAR-END SUMMARY OF BUSINESS FLIGHT CLEARANCES

REF: (A) STATE 279666, (B) MOSCOW 6668, (C) MOSCOW 1217

1. DURING 1976, EMBASSY SUBMITTED TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
12 REQUESTS FOR PRIVATE U.S. FIRMS FOR FLIGHT CLEARANCE FOR BUSINESS
FLIGHTS INTO THE USSR. FIVE WERE APPROVED, SIX WERE REJECTED, AND
THE LAST, COCA-COLA, MOST LIKELY WOULD HAVE BEEN APPROVED EXCEPT
THAT THE TRIP WAS CANCELLED.

2. THE PATTERN FOR APPROVALS SEEMS CLEAR. OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM
(THREE REQUESTS) IS A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY BECAUSE OF DR. HAMMER'S
SPECIAL STATUS. GE AND CBS WERE APPROVED BECAUSE THE TALKS WERE
ON SUBJECTS OF KEEN INTEREST TO THE USSR. THE SAME WOULD HAVE BEEN
TRUE FOR COCA-COLA.

3. THE PATTERN OF REFUSALS (COOK INDUSTRIES - TWICE - JOC OIL,
HOOKER CHEMICAL, DEERE AND COMPANY, AND PHILIP MORRIS) IS MORE
DIFFICULT TO DISCERN. MFA NEVER GIVES AN OFFICIAL REASON FOR THE
TURNDOWN. THE "UNOFFICIAL" REASONS MOST FREQUENTLY ADVANCED
BY OUR MINISTRY CONTACTS ARE THAT THE VISIT IS EXPLORATORY
IN NATURE WITH NO MAJOR CONTRACT TO BE SIGNED OR THAT THE
HOST MINISTRY OR STATE COMMITTEE WAS NOT INFORMED BY THE
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FIRM OF ITS DESIRE FOR THE FLIGHT AND THEREFORE THE
REQUEST WAS NOT SUPPORTED. ONE REQUEST, DEERE AND COMPANY,
WE WERE TOLD, WAS REFUSED BECAUSE OF POOR WEATHER CONDI-
TIONS IN FEBRUARY, REFTEL C. IF THERE IS A COMMON THREAD
IN THE REJECTIONS, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE PROPOSED
TALKS WERE EXPLORATORY IN NATURE AND THAT THE ENVISAGED

RETURNS WERE NOT HIGHLY PROMISING.

4. TWO "OFF-ROUTE" CHARTERS WERE ALSO APPROVED IN 1976.
ONE EACH FOR PAN AM AND WORLD AIRWAYS.

5. COMMENT: EARLY THIS YEAR EMBASSY DID DISCERN A TOUGHER
MFA ATTITUDE ON OVERFLIGHT CLEARANCES, REFTEL C, PARTICULARLY IN JANUARY-MARCH WHEN DEERE, COOK, AND PHILIP MORRIS APPLICATIONS WERE REJECTED. SHORTLY THEREAFTER CAME THE REPORT, REFTEL B, FROM A FRENCH SOURCE THAT SUCH FLIGHTS BY WESTERN BUSINESSMEN TO THE USSR WOULD NO LONGER BE APPROVED. THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SHOWN TO BE INACCURATE, AT LEAST FOR U.S. FIRMS, AS ALL FIVE APPROVALS HAVE COME IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR. NONETHELESS, THE SOVIETS CAN BE EXPECTED TO APPROVE A FLIGHT REQUEST ONLY WHEN THERE IS A PRESSING COMMERCIAL INTEREST AND THE HOST ORGANIZATION HAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE APPLICATION WITH MFA. THE POLICY OF STRICT SELECTIVITY IS DESIGNED TO DISCOURAGE "MARGINAL" FIRMS FROM APPLYING AND TO REMIND WESTERN BUSINESSMEN THAT APPROVAL FOR OVERFLIGHTS CANNOT BE AUTOMATICALLY EXPECTED. IN SUM, WHEN DOING BUSINESS WITHIN THE USSR, THE SOVIETS WILL SET THE OPERATIONAL RULES OF THE GAME.

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